

Gwin discussing Templeton machine:

I only used it to make one tape and that was Irving Bridge, and in large part the machine was designed to meet the needs of that videotape, although when I was designing the machine I didn't really know what the videotape was. As I look back on it now, what I was trying to do . . . my interest was really to make a machine that would do things that I wanted to do. It also worked . . . there were a lot of other people, it wasn't only me and Larry. Willard Rosenquist did a lot to talk about it. But Willard maybe less than me, because Willard was never very comfortable with machines. (short break about Willard here) But the main thrust of that machine was designed to make that videotape, Irving Bridge. We had another machine, I can't remember the name of it ((a CVI)). It had a little, almost unusable matrix and you couldn't control the colors except with pins, there was no knob for controlling colors (break here discussing this device, not interesting) Steve Beck borrowed this device from whomever made it. (this machine was there '69 or '70) Brice Howard really had some interesting ideas about television, video. Now they seem a little dated, but that's because the equipment has changed. He really set himself apart from the broadcast thing. He just was fed up with it, didn't want to have anything to do with it.

Jon: He'd been a producer for many years at educational stations?

Bill: First at NBC he was a producer and then he was the unit producer or executive producer for cultural programming. He did the Howdy Doody Show. He was the producer for the Howdy Doody Show for years. I always thought that was strange, very strange. Anyway, he had been there for a long time and then he went to WNET when WNET was still a major production house, before BPS and the Corporation were formed. He got a change, I guess it was Jim Day, this is all before I was out there, so I'm not exactly sure, but the President of the station, I think, invited him to set up an experimental laboratory with money he had gotten from the Rockefeller Foundation and that was the year before I was out there, that was only working in the station's facility. They had about 6 or 8 artists, a bunch of artists, Richard Felciano was one of them and Bill Allen was another, he's a painter, and he's a friend of Bruce Nauman's, and Nauman did a tape there, it might have been his first videotape, it was one of those flower arrangements, (break while we discuss Nauman's work), Joanne Kyger did Descartes, I think one of the most successful things; Phil Green, who was a filmmaker, at the time was a filmmaker at KQED, did a couple of pieces; He and Bernie Stauffer did a really nice thing called The Ridge. But all of that was done in the studio, there was absolutely nothing experimental about their facility, it was strictly a broadcast facility.

And after that, Brice wanted to get out of that, out of a broadcast environment, that's about when I got there. When I go - there they were doing this piece called "Heimskringla," which I think is a really creative work and deserves more attention than it's ever had. But it was strictly a broadcast situation, except that the images were utterly synthesized.

Jon: What machine did they use to do that?

Bill: Well they used keyers, that's the main thing, keyers and mixing devices, and also they did a thing with studio color cameras, debeamed them, so that you'd get these funny ghosts that would move around. Bob Zagone was really good at directing that stuff and getting camera motions that would work with that kind of movement. That and combined with just a hell of (a lot of) chroma keying and getting a lot of the same feeling of a multistage keyer, but getting it through many

passes. They were in a 2 inch situation, they could do that a dozen times or so, and some of them were that many passes to make some of those images.

Jon: Passes of tape?

Bill: Yeah, replays. You sort of did it in little steps, because that's all the facility would handle and then you could do it without any loss of quality.

Jon: These things read like real-time! Except for editing, it looks like all the effects were done in single take shots.

Bill: They used tape but in a real-time situation. Irving Bridge is real time, you know and it's entirely taped. That was a really important thing for Brice, an important notion. And I think it's important in shaping the way I think about video, maybe more than anything else is that notion that it can be a real-time situation. It's a way of preserving that kind of interaction. A way that you never sort of had . . . But he always would include tape and I always thought of it that same way. Using tape didn't remove it from being live, it's just the way that tape is used, and the tape is used just as it were another camera, except that, in that context, the image that comes in is a good deal more complex than what would be coming from a camera. But "Heimskringla" always had actors who were interacting with the tape. We had a lot of monitors in the studio, so people were seeing what was happening. That's another thing that Brice always insisted on a lot that you not let people think they're in a theatrical situation, because that's what a television studio is like. It's like a proscenium stage, sometimes it goes all the way around, but essentially the mindset is the same as a theatrical one, unless you do something to make people realize that they're working for a tiny little two-dimensional box. So he always would put monitors all over the place. That's when I first encountered it, they were just at the end of "Heimskringla," just at the final mixing of it. But after that, that was the last thing Brice wanted to do in a television situation, and after that, when I started working there we were really completely removed from any kind of broadcast situation and we didn't have any bloody equipment, just nothing for the first year.

Jon: So that he physically separated . . .

Bill: He was still financially and legally a part of the station, all of our salaries and all of the grants all went to the station; that was always true. But he had a separate studio, it was in this big old garage that he set up. It was just this empty space that KQED had, they were using it for storage I think and he took that over. But it was essentially separate. My day was in no way connected to a broadcast television studio.

Jon: What are the judgments behind this decision?

Bill: The judgments were a great many years that Brice spent having to go through the kinds of inhuman contortions to function in a television station environment. His realizing that that was a situation that would not allow for any kind of real creativity to occur.

Jon: And these referred to working with engineers . . .

Bill: Not only with engineers, not the people but the system. The fact that you were there and that there was this kind of very rigid schedule was the main thing, I think, that he found destructive. The fact that you never had any time to try something that you thought might fail. You were just never

given that chance so that you had to figure out everything ahead of time in a way that you knew wouldn't fail. That doesn't mean that you had to figure it out in a way that you knew would be the most successful, it meant that you had to figure it out in a way that you knew wouldn't fail. And that meant you chopped off the top. I mean you just eliminated that most interesting part, the most adventurous part from the beginning. You said to yourself, I don't know if that will work and I can't waste my time, because my time is \$400 an hour. And that system just made it impossible to function.

(break here)

Jon: Can you tell me something about the policies that went into NCET. It seems at the beginning to be strongly broadcast oriented. It was making tapes that would be broadcast.

Bill: No, that's wrong. It wasn't from the first the case. It was never strictly broadcast oriented. They did use only broadcast tools but I think that's because Brice or anyone else who was setting this up had any alternative. Indeed, there were no other tools, much, there was no 1/2 inch machines, or cassettes, there were 1" machines and they were terrible. So there was no sort of small format, that tool hadn't arrived. It had arrived to a certain extent; there were CV portapak around at that time, but they weren't the sort of thing you would know about. Brice I don't think had any familiarity with them either. He was working in a broadcast studio, but I think he found that a compromise, not something that he wanted. And indeed at the end of that year his decision may be confirmed by the experiences of that year was that he had to set up a separate studio, even though that studio meant that the image you could make was vastly . . . When I started there was a black and white camera, I mean one, and that's the truth and it was that way for several months and then we had tape machines and one monitor. And then we finally got two black and white cameras, a little mixer, one of those Sony SEG-1s, and it would mix two channels of video, a keyer and you could do some funny thing about going to a negative image with it if you screwed with it a lot. It was a long time that we had only that. Brice wanted to be a caveman, that's what he wanted to do, you know, he wanted to be doing cave paintings, he really did. He thought he saw this kind of potential in this kind of technology that had just been completely ignored because the technology had been so devoted to commercial applications from its very beginnings, it had always been utterly commercial. And artists just aren't commercial, you know, and I think Brice had tried to function as an artist in television and he just couldn't do it. And I think no one can do it. I really think that's a big problem. He wanted to find a way to move away from that, and he didn't care if he didn't have any equipment. He didn't really want anything. I think he might have been most excited about what we were doing when we had one black and white camera. Who was there then were Willard Rosenquist and Bernie Stauffer and Brice and Ann Turner, who was a kind of, I don't know, she kind of did everything, she was an administrative assistant I guess, I don't know what the title was. And Rita Howard was there, Brice's wife, who was there as Assistant Director of . . . I don't know what her title was either. And that's when I got there in summer of '69 and '70. They already had that facility there when I got there. Paul Kaufman was there, he was a research associate or something, he had a grant to write a paper, I think about the impact of television, I

never read it actually. But he wasn't ever working in the facility. It was really Brice and Willard and Bernie and I and Richard Felciano was sometimes there and sometimes not. He teaches at Berkeley, but he worked there.

We did some really peculiar things. Some of the stuff that's up in Buffalo is really strange stuff. All those things with those lights and anything you could think of to make an image that you could put in front of a camera and how you make it move. And making it move was the biggest bloody problem I ever saw in my life. And if you wanted to stay fairly abstract, and we tended to do fairly abstract things. And then we started using feedback, and that started being a big part of what I did. Bob Zagone taught me how to do that, and I don't know where he learned it, somebody showed him how. I don't know where he saw it. I spent a long, long time doing things with feedback, that was sort of the main thrust of my work, that and the things I did with Willard, the Light forms, which was really more Willard's than mine in a lot of ways.

Jon: So there was no pressure at all to make tapes?

Bill: No, not from Brice. I think Brice had a lot of pressure. Indeed I think that's one of the things that destroyed the place. Nobody thought it was working, that there was nothing coming out. Brice would come back and try to show tapes to people here and in the East Coast. The Rockefeller grant wasn't renewed after the first year. (short break)

Jon: So you were in this protected environment.

Bill: Entirely, and I don't really think anybody thought what we were doing was worth a damn thing except Brice did. And I think he managed to keep money flowing, I don't know who else helped him. I truly don't know who managed to get that money from the Corporation. Channel 13 I think gave a lot. But anyway, he managed somehow and I was never under any pressure to make things, except whenever we had to apply for a grant we'd go through this horrible period of trying to put together some kind of videotapes because the tapes we made were these long, long, slow things that barely changed. And Lord! You try to show them to people and they just fall asleep, they didn't pretend to look at the damn things. So we ended up always making these samplers. There was always this period of around a month, this big traumatic month trying to put together a tape that would be able to catch people's attention, and I don't know, I guess we didn't manage to do it in the final analysis because it didn't get funded. The thing about the technology is that most of the time I was there, it wasn't that was really devoted to figuring out new technology, for a long time. And then Brice hired Steven to do the synthesizer.

Jon: There was that kind of a contractual arrangement? I thought he came as just another associate.

Bill: What happened was that Brice had a guy who was going to come, I can't remember his name, and build a synthesizer, to build some kind of tool it wasn't specified in any way, and something happened and that guy ended up building a switcher for the station, some kind of monstrous multi-channel matrix patch switching system.
(chit-chat about KQED studios here)

So Steven came specifically to replace this guy so it was that very particular arrangement in the beginning. I had expected to have the kind of relationship with Steven that I ended up having with

Larry Templeton, but it didn't happen. I don't know why not. Steven wasn't very interested in anyone's input into the development of his machine, he really wanted to do it by himself. That's what he did. So after that, since I wasn't managing to work with the machine that Steven was building, which I really never did work with.

Jon: Did you not have access?

Bill: Access was difficult. It was never in a state when it was a finished product, and it was difficult to learn and I just never managed to work with it for one reason or another. I don't exactly know why not to tell you the truth.

Jon: So nobody else worked with it either except for him?

Bill: No, really basically not. I mean some, a little bit, and I worked with it a little bit but never enough to do any pieces with it. And I don't know what happened after I left, maybe more after I left because it did get to be a more finished machine, which it never was and probably never will be, but more then than now. And he was building it and it was a hard situation to let somebody work with it. It wasn't very together. Then Larry Templeton came in. He was a friend of Ann Turner, and he was an engineer; he is an engineer. He had a firm, did commercial jobs, designed television systems basically. I think he did a good deal of work with satellites. He came in and worked on this thing, it was like a hobby for him, something he was just doing.

Jon: He did this while maintaining his other job?

Bill: Yeah, we never paid him anything, maybe we paid his expenses; I'm not even sure about that. Maybe we gave him a little bit of money but we certainly didn't give him any kind of a salary.

Jon: So he came because of Ann Turner?

Bill: He came because of Ann and he was just interested I guess, just was interested in the images. So he and Willard and I mostly at that point and Brice too but mostly Willard and I started talking about making a machine and he designed that thing, that multi-stage keyer.

Jon: What kind of conversations did you have?

Bill: Well, we talked mostly about what kind of things we wanted to do, what kind of images, how you needed to be able to control the colors.

Jon: So you were talking about both visual effects and manual control.

Bill: The interface and the visual effects were the only things I ever would talk about and Larry did the circuitry entirely on his own. I had absolutely nothing to do with that.

Jon: And how did you express these kinds of ideas?

Bill: That's hard to say, I don't know how to say that. In the first place, Larry knew what the work we'd done looked like and I had done that work with that other multi-stage keyer which was the closest I had come to having a thing which would do what I wanted. I guess what I did was to describe to him what I thought were the problems, the rigidities in that keyer that I had worked with, and where the limitations were. The main ones in the pin things, not having the flexibility of input and the ability to change in real-time. And also the color controls. And I must say that I think the colorizers that he designed are just far and away the best ones and the main thing is the joystick. And I don't know why other people don't use them, frankly. It's just a mystery to me. They're not expensive, just a couple of extra hundred dollars for pots. And you can do everything you can do with knobs except you can do a lot more. So anyway, that is the thing about his machine that I think is just better.

Jon: So, you had been working in certain modes for a year at least at NCET and knew fairly much what you wanted to do, and you were then able to describe on the basis of your frustrations with the other machine an ideal machine.

Bill: Something like that, yeah, that's exactly right. And he'd build something and bring it in and it would be there and everybody would work with it. And he'd be there. He spent a lot of time in the studio. He spent a lot of time being there when people were working to see for himself what kind of problems. Also we had at the time a Buchla synthesizer, this is about the last year. I was out there when all this was happening, so '72 and the end of '71. We'd bought this really nice Buchla machine and by then we'd accumulated things like . . . we had color decks and we had a portapak mostly it was a one inch studio, we had a 5000 and we had the next 5000, the 5000A. It was supposed to edit but it never worked. They were really a terrific pain, those one inch machines (chit chat about 1" machines) They were the worst, they just were the worst machines.

Jon: The 5000 is a 1/2" deck.

Bill: There was a 5000 Ampex which was black and white and did not edit. But we also had the 5000 Sony color 1/2". We had a Sony color camera, that fairly early one, a color Ampex deck, so we had 2 black and white cameras and a color studio camera and 2 Ampex decks (B&W?).

Jon: And signal processing equipment?

Bill: For a long time nothing, nothing at all. There are a lot of tapes where color comes from rescanning the television screen and you get this kind of blue. You could de-beam the camera a little bit and you'd get a kind of a brownish color. I never much used that color camera; it had such a high light level it was really hard to use. We had that one Sony SEG, but we didn't have any kind of colorizer. We didn't have any keyers or anything until we got this thing that Larry started building, except that black and white keyer.

Jon: And a sync generator?

Bill: Steven bought a sync generator, one of the first things when he came, so that was there and Larry used it, but not before then. I don't know how the cameras were run, off the tape machine I guess, those two cameras. Maybe internal, maybe they were on their own sync. Bernie Stauffer was

the engineer who did all that stuff. He's a really neat guy. He just hated the notion of machines taking over from people. He was there part time for a while and part time he was at the station. He had been at the station since it started. He was maybe their first engineer. The fact of Bernie made Brice's first year a lot more possible, because Bernie really got into that stuff right off the bat, just because that's the kind of guy he was. And since he had been there he was the most senior engineer at that station, he could make people do things, or get people to do things in a pretty easy way and he got along really easily with people.

Templeton then came. He did his machines and he brought them in and put them in place. The rest of the system was really something that Bernie kept running, (short break mostly discussion of Hallock) What happened to Bernie was that one day when we brought that Buchla synthesizer in . . . It was really a science fiction looking gizmo, as big as this table, it was really huge and it had all these flashing lights. The only piece of equipment that never caused us any trouble. When that came in Bernie left. He just walked out. He'd been kind of getting freaked out, because he couldn't make the machines do what people wanted. I mean the machines were incapable of doing what we were trying to do and Bernie wanted to make it work and he couldn't make it work, because Bernie wasn't a . . . couldn't design stuff, he was a production engineer, a terrific cameraman, a suburb cameraman and a really good technical director. Somebody to do the mixing for you in that kind of situation and did a little bit of maintenance but not a lot of maintenance. He always hated to do maintenance. He wanted to be making things what he wanted to be about. And he was terrific at that. He really was a superb cameraman, a good lighting person, he knew all of that. He knew how to make a television studio produce something. He was asked to do something a lot he didn't like to do and wasn't trained to do, and yet he wanted so badly to make the damn stuff work. So there was a lot of pressure on him that way and one day this machine came in and he left. He wasn't obsolete, but I think he felt obsolete. It was a great blow to the place actually for him to leave. (short break) What he left about was more this complexity. I think he looked at this Buchla machine and he just said "Jesus Christ, if those guys think I'm going to keep that fucking machine running, they're crazy!" and he just left. (short break) Last I heard he was driving a taxi in San Francisco. Anyway, that's about the same time that Don came and also Bill Roarty came at about the same time. And the place had gotten a lot of other obligations. It never got money to do what I was doing, never did. Nobody ever gave the Center a cent for an artist to work there. The Center got money, they had this training program, the interns were the main thing that they got money for. An then there were always these other grants that you were supposed to do, to use . . . it was always an effort to say "How can we somehow make this relevant, all the stuff that we're doing?" But there was never any money to just say, nobody ever said this stuff is interesting and you should continue to do it, except Brice of course. There was no pressure on me. This was, I think what was happening. But anyway, Roarty came at the same time, and I think Roarty was hired in relation to the intern program, as I was part of the time.

Jon: And David Dowe and Jerry Hunt?

Bill: David Dowe was an intern. David Dowe was never at the Center except for a six week time as an intern, and he is the only intern that really took anything, as best as I can tell. He's the only one who came back from the Center with anything. And he went away and set up his own laboratory. Jerry Hunt was with him there. And there was some kind of an arrangement between their place and the Center. And there was this notion that there would be a lot of experimental centers spread

around. The one in San Francisco would be the kind of coordinating place. I don't think that ever really worked. It was articulated, it was never realized.

Jon: And Bob Jungels?

Bill: Bob Jungels just came, he was never officially there. He came out and spent time because he was interested.

Jon: I thought the Rhode Island center was officially affiliated.

Bill: They were going to be, it was going to be SMU and Rhode Island and the Ann Arbor television station, which is at the University I think was going to be the third one. But I don't think they ever got any money or, . . . I don't think there was ever anything but proposals to link them. I may be wrong about that. But Bob came just out of interest and just was there on his own, then he went back and set this thing up and there was a lot of interchange between him in Rhode Island and the Center.

(break to 270, return to discussion of Templeton)

Anyway, that machine was only built, and indeed it was a pretty shakily built, meaning that whenever I wanted to work Larry had to be there, and he spent a hell of a lot of time working out problems because the boards were never built in the sense of getting to the point . . . it was all wires, although he did have some people towards the end building some boards, he wasn't a very good board builder himself and he was pretty sloppy. And so they'd work and sometimes they did stay put together so he was always there.

I don't know how to say it, it came from an image though, it came from the notion, and in that sense Brice has as much to do with it as anybody else. He had a lot of the ideas about what kind of an image might be interesting on television, how one might go about putting together the various elements. We talked a lot about it being a flat image, I mean it was always a way to move towards an abstraction was always the thrust.

Jon: You saw this as a property of video?

Bill: Yeah, I think Brice did see it as sort of an inherent property. I wouldn't say that myself, I would say it's just a possibility of video. But it is the possibility that interests me. That's the thing I have always done. And that's the thing I had gotten to, I mean the notion of being able to mix several various elements, several discreet elements and to add color to them. That was the notion and the reason the quantizer was a nice thing for me was that it let, it gave me a way to get a graphic element into it, and by mixing down before the basic input to the quantizer you could end up with a very abstract kind of an image with a lot of control over it, with a lot of ability to change the linear structure of it and to change it with a good deal of precision once you learn that machine,

(break here)

Jon: There was never any thought of image generation with this machine?

Bill: Well, Steven's machine was supposed to interface with it, so no. Although, I think we would have gotten to that. You see, I left as soon as I finished Irving Bridge and Larry didn't . . . I don't think he did much more at the Center, but basically the machine stayed the way it was when I left it. He, I don't think, built many more modules. I suspect that had we continued with it the next thing to do would be some kind of image generation.

Jon: (inaudible, but something like this:) The reason it did not include image generation was that you hadn't gotten to it yet?

Bill: Yes

Jon: It was not an esthetic decision?

Bill: Well it was in some ways. I have always been more interested in taking a realistic image and doing something with it than in generating a completely abstract image. So from my point of view it was a preference. What's the preference now, is to have a system that has both of those potentials. But if I had to chose between one or the other I would certainly chose the one that would let me modify photographic images rather than one that generates electronic ones directly.

(break, I show Templeton write up to Gwin, he discusses Richard Stevens, bull sessions at the center)

Bill: I was there as an artist, as far as I was concerned. I really felt it was the only thing I had to offer to the place. Whenever I tried to do anything else, I don't think it was much worth while.

Jon: You mean administrative work?

Bill: No I never did administrative work. One of the jobs I was supposed to take care of was to deal with the interns in the sense of helping them to relate to this equipment.

Jon: You mean, as an instructor?

Bill: Yeah, as an instructor. They were mostly producers, directors who had had a good deal of experience in broadcast facility but had never touched a dial, and so what we tried to do was to get them to think of things that they could do with this very simple small system. And there were usually several of them, six or eight or ten, and what their time would be taken up with would be talking with Brice. He had this long rap that he would give them over a period of time and what that rap consisted of was notions of how television could be a more expressive tool, how it could be used to do something besides just to convey information from one place to another but could be used as a creative tool. And then what I was supposed to do, me and Bernie and Willard, was to get these people to work with this facility and to think of ways to use this. Basically to try to get them to think about abstract images, that was the main thing. But we used to have these mixes. Usually Willard would think up some kind of configuration of things that would require a lot of people moving lights, moving cameras, stuff like that. And we would have this, Bernie and I would try to make the video relate to this situation somehow and try to put something together in a kind of free-flowing situation. So that was my institutional responsibility, and I don't know, well I never felt as

if I did much there. I guess . . . we did manage to get these people to do this stuff there. I don't think they ever thought about it again after they left except for a few, like David Dowe. I don't know, maybe some others did, maybe I just never heard of it.

At least from my point of view, there was always this conflict between having to justify doing my work because--and again, I have to insist, not on the part of Brice, he never was doing that, he always was supportive as can be but from the outside, there was always this pressure to justify what we were doing, and we never managed to convince people of it as best I can tell. So that was a basic and very troublesome ambiguity in my situation.

Jon: So you were supported in this unique facility, so you were given like a holiday to develop and to experiment.

Bill: That's right, it was wonderful chance. It's important. It does not exist anymore, the chance to learn that I had and the teacher to teach it. It was that way, it was like this wonderful chance, a wonderful sort of gift. It just fell out of the sky and gave me this place where I could just work for three years. Going in there with literally no notion of anything about it, I mean literally. I'd been painting for two or three years and did some sculpture but nothing at all with film and nothing with television. Nothing. So it was a really good chance to learn about it, to learn how to think about it, how to work with it and to kind of learn the tool and to let the tool sort of grow along with you.

Jon: Did you have the sense that what you were doing was the state of the art?

Bill: Yes. A very strong sense of that. We knew . . . when I first got there. I didn't know of any other places although I know now that there were other places and as we would be there we would encounter these other groups that were doing similar things, but everybody you encountered was in exactly the same position we were in, so it was in fact the state of the art at that time. It was a very primitive state.

Jon: So would it be fair to say that the impetus and the justification for the program came from a kind of historical perspective of your activities and the possibilities of video tools?

Bill: Yeah, that was our point of view, that was my point of view. I think that was Brice's point of view. And I think it may be true. He was early on to make a kind of coherent statement of . . . verbally I mean, not in works, and that was I think a conflict for Brice. He never really managed to make anything after Heimskringla. He never wanted to, he wanted to do experiments, that's kind of the way he thought of it, things to see what could be done, things to make you think about it. But he was never interested in the product, he was only interested in the thought that product might generate. And that was exciting, but at the same time it left you with no product and when people wanted to know what you did it was hard to say. If they couldn't look at the tapes and see it, and most people didn't.

Jon: That's a real ambiguity for a lot of people in that situation. Many people found themselves within this art context but did not exactly feel comfortable being there, their objectives lying elsewhere.

Bill: Except that wasn't a problem for me.

Jon: But it seems to be for Brice.

Bill: I always thought it was for Brice. Well, I guess Brice always meant in the future that we would get to this point where we did production. But the notion was there was a need to step away for a period and to think about it. The thing that was important to me, that was really important to me was the notion that here was this new thing that's nothing happening with it and it has a lot of potential and we ought to think of ways to save it from . . . and indeed it was that kind of a feeling of saving this wonderful medium from the obnoxious purpose it's always been put to. And so there was a kind of willful pride in stepping away from a television station's facility and trying to think of ways to function on this much more primitive level. The notion being that with this more primitive technology—and this is the notion that started to drive me crazy after a while—you could arrive at a kind of basic notion, ways of thinking about this medium. That was really fine, it was terrific for the first couple of years and then I started desperately wanting to make something. And I found myself constantly running up against the inadequacy of the facility, constantly. Sometimes it was really hard because of that. Everything I thought of got reduced to this very simple level and you could never do anything the way you wanted to do it. And that started turning into a real bummer at that point. And it's about that point that we started getting better equipment. It was a similar situation for everyone in fact that kind of had arrived at this place where they began to have a notion of what to do but at the same time felt that that kind of facility was really inadequate to that notion, so there was never much notion of going back into the television station, although we did on a couple of occasions go in for a day or two days to do something. And Bob Zagone would occasionally do things—programs—that thing he did of rock concerts, West pole or something like that.

Jon: These were broadcast tapes?

Bill: These were broadcast tapes, but he was really working with the same perspective. Bob spent a lot of time around the Center, Bob was always at the Center. He was always working at the station as a director but he spent a lot of time at the Center and was always around and did a lot of work with us, did the feedback stuff. So those tapes he did at the station were an attempt I think on his part to apply these notions to a television station's facility. And they worked and he had a lot of problems but at the same time I think he did a lot of really interesting things with them.

(Bill buys Volkswagen, break here)

It's not as if Brice wasn't interested in broadcast television. I think he was interested in it all along and wanted to change it and I have a feeling that interview was him trying to find another way to talk about this piece of art (((referring to VEN of Irving Bridge and discussion/presentation accompanying))) to put into some kind of context without doing something really traditional. Those people are students.

Jon: Their naiveté is charming, but I don't think it was informative.

Bill: Well I don't think it was intended to be informative. If it was going to be put on television, it's a way to explain to people what's going to happen. To a degree it works.

Jon: Because it tells you how you might respond to this kind of work.

Bill: I suspect that's a lot of what he wanted to do with it. And I don't know what kind of packaging they did with the others, but that was all something that happened after I left except that I know they got some money to do programs. I don't think they were ever broadcast, not as a program. Irving Bridge has been broadcast around and about, but I don't think there was ever a PBS series called VEN, I don't think it ever happened. I think individual pieces were probably broadcast, but right at the time that was occurring was when the Center was kind of coming to a . . . at least when Brice was involved the Center was ending and the institution continued for maybe 6-8 months or a year after that but then it really had changed into something different and they were working on production of broadcast programs.

(brake here, but mentions program on Ecotopia with Steven and Don involved. This program was never broadcast).

Bill on Templeton's device: It let you mix a lot of different images, it let you have access to a lot of different images without ever changing the patch so that you could change back and forth between nineteen. That's something that's not exactly available on other . . . like the Hearn doesn't give you exactly that capacity. You can make the Hearn do that by piling it up, but you use up a lot of functions to mix. And you had to have a scope to use Larry's machine, you just couldn't work with it otherwise, because with that many inputs, and we didn't have any limiters on them, you would quickly have a level that was outside any reasonable level. So that was something that was always a basic part of my working out there, was that thing.

Jon: Did you ever have any contact with the Videola or the Vidium?

Bill: The Videola, I did.

Jon: Do you know what happened to it, by the way?

Bill: It was offered to Gerry.

Jon: They took it apart and used it for scrap lumber.

Bill: Did they really, that's what Don told me was going to happen to it. He said, "If you know anybody who wants it . . ." It's too bad, because it was a beautiful construction quite aside from . . .

Jon: Did you ever use it?

Bill: I tried to use it but I was never around enough to really use it. I once showed Irving Bridge on it in that show they had at the Museum out there, but I didn't really like it. It just made it into something entirely different, kind of an arbitrary thing. I don't mean that it was always that. I think Don did some things, and Steven that were very nice and were made for it.

Jon: But to take a tape that was not made for it . . .

Bill: You ended up with very pretty pictures. You couldn't make an ugly picture, you can barely make one with video and you certainly couldn't make one if you put it into this thing, because anything . . . all of those patterns going around that sphere is just a really strong image. It was one of those things that to get something that was planned and had any thoughtfulness to it, it was hard. And one of the hardest things to overcome was the naturally impressive situation. And I saw some tapes that worked very nicely and I thought that was an exciting thing.

Jon: Did you ever use the Vidium.

Bill: Never heard of it. (break while I describe the machine to him)

Jon: So you had not really any dialog with Hearn or people at the Exploratorium of Video Free America.

Bill: No. A little bit with Ginsburg, but just a little.

Jon: And not at all with Sweeny?

Bill: I met him but never any kind of . . .

Jon: And not so much with Beck in fact?

Bill: No, very little with Steven. We would be a part of group discussions but we never had any kind of a collaboration, it just never happened. I don't know why the Center was isolated from the other groups in the Bay area. I have a feeling it had something to do with the generations, but I think that the fact that Brice was older somehow and more established. Paul at least I think wanted us . . . wanted more to change the system than to come up with a counter system, and I think that kind of sets the place at odds with other people. I never quite understood why it was going on while I was out there but people would come in . . . Also, I guess the Center had more money and equipment than those places. I know I, in a rather selfish way-- but I felt sort of possessive of it and jealous of the time and I think that that was also a problem because we didn't really make it available except to the people who were there and the internship program. Which meant quite a large number of people actually used it.

Jon: But they were basically people who had no independent ideas about video art, they were basically station managers.

Bill: No, none of the interns had any art background at all. Some of them might be art directors, quite a lot of them in fact and not television directors. (break while we make nonsense about interns)

Jon: How did you get involved in electronic media?

Bill: I don't know, I just fell in love with it the moment I first set eyes on it, when I walked in and watched them making Heimskringla. I don't know why, because it moves. Because you have this ability to make it change in moments. It's the only thing that can go faster than you can keep up with.

Jon: How is it connected to your painting?

Bill: The same concerns with the very significant addition of motion, of movement are there in both. But similar attitudes about color, composition and when I say that about composition, I mean graphic composition which gets radically changed when it moves. I don't want to overstate the similarities because there is this huge difference which is one moves and one never moves and that's a fundamental difference. But the sense of color for one thing is very closely related and the basic attitude about a kind of image which is to begin with something that is a shared image in the society. And I mean that in a very general way like a landscape is sort of an image one has a notion how far you move away from a realistic image because everybody has a notion of what a landscape really looks like, so that when you make modifications in it, you make abstractions which allow you to get at another kind of expression, an expression which has to do with rhythms of color and spatial relations which can move between very realistic and very abstract and you can play around with a lot of things. But you have this . . . everyone sort of knows where you're moving from, because there is a shared image, a shared notion. And I guess that's the sort of basic place both of the things come from which is the reason my videotapes always have some photo- graphic image at some point or another.

Jon: Because of that identification?

Bill: Yeah, because of that need. Also in video it's because you can get a much more complex image with a camera in some way than you can ever do with any abstract thing so far that's ever come along. I'd like the freedom to make up images the way I can in paint, but that doesn't exactly exist in video. By using realistic images and then colorizing them you can approach that freedom and you give your-self at the same . . . what you gain is sort of recording your feelings and instantaneous recording. Which leads you to some places you might never get with painting, because you can change, you can reach, say different color combinations for instance than I think you might reach with painting. Not because the colors are necessarily different, but because since they change you can do different things with them. I got away from the notion of how they're similar.

Jon: Do you mean accident?

Bill: No, I mean if you were painting a painting and there's only going to be these two colors sitting next to each other and they're always going to be that way, well maybe there's some color combinations you might eliminate and they're there and some color combination passes by in a few seconds or minute or some length short of some length of time, the kinds of combinations, the kinds of points of emphasis can be arranged differently because you can change them, you can make some-thing . . . say because the spatial situation can be radically changed with the color or

with the luminance. So in that way is what I mean. In some ways you give yourself a little more freedom about the color combinations.